

Indiana wants me, Lord, I can't go back there

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

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Indiana Jones' *Last Crusade* unsurprisingly enough to anyone who knows a bit about the way in which movie franchises work, *wasn't*. The archaeologist adventurer's triennial junket in what was then a trilogy, was unveiled to a clamouring audience in 1989. From an initial outlay of \$54.4 million, the winning formula raked in a staggering \$474.2 million at the box office. Not too shabby for a crusty, historical documentary about rummaging for archaic relics!

Shock-horror! A series of Amiga games based on the Indy phenomenon were produced to complement the movies, Temple of Doom being the first developed on behalf of the license-holding publishers, U.S. Gold, in 1989 courtesy of Level Systems. A Last Crusade action game and a separate point and click adventure followed in the same year developed by Tiertex and Lucasfilm respectively. Finally in 1992/93 LucasArts produced another action/adventure duo

known as Fate of Atlantis revolving around an original story with no accompanying celluloid counterpart. Indianapolis 500 *wasn't* part of the Indy universe just to clear up any confusion. Sadly he didn't even get a drive-by cameo.

Today we'll be looking at Tiertex's action game, which was released for every available platform under the sun...

Amiga (1989), Amstrad CPC (1989), Atari ST (1989), Commodore 64 (1989), DOS (1989), Game Boy (1994), Game Gear (1991), SEGA Genesis (1992), MSX (1989), NES (1993), SEGA Master System (1990) and ZX Spectrum (1989).

You have my sincerest apologies in advance given that Tiertex will forever be associated with ghastly, atrocious arcade conversions - the worst offender undoubtedly being Street Fighter for the Amiga - yet bizarrely continued to secure lucrative contracts for repeat commissions.

As late as 2003 the Manchester-based firm (the posh part in Didsbury) were still in business developing Game Boy Advance titles, before shifting their focus to mobile and web gaming. Up until 2016, now located in Macclesfield (which is also very affluent incidentally), Tiertex had an operational web site from which they sold USB LED matrix displays and PIC micro-controller boards. Their domain name has since expired suggesting that the company is now defunct, which unfathomably, despite their contribution to the entertainment realm strikes me as quite sad.

Tiertex's action-orientated Amiga offering was the work of coder, John Prince, graphicians, Nick Pavis (credited in-game as 'Blue Turtle') and Steve Purcell (who was also responsible for some of Monkey Island II's luscious backdrops), and musician, Mike Davies.



Uncustomarily, Mark Haigh-Hutchinson both designed and programmed the Spectrum and Amstrad versions of Last Crusade, programmed the DOS iteration, and along with Paul Gill and Tiertex co-founder, Donald Campbell, coded the NES interpretation. Mark went on to work as a Project Leader and Senior Programmer for LucasArts, and then as a Senior Engineer for Retro Studios, before tragically succumbing to pancreatic cancer in 2008 at the age of only 43.

Comprised of four levels loosely inspired by key events plucked straight from the movie, the game gets underway with the prequel prologue scene set in 1912 where we're introduced to the young Indiana Jones as a 13-year-old boy scout, played by the supremely talented, and prematurely late River Phoenix on the silver screen. Cocaine is bad for your health apparently.



Out horse riding with his troop in Utah's Arches National Park Indy stumbles across a series of intriguing caves and sets off to investigate. There he rumbles a degenerate posse of grave robbers in the process of pilfering Coronado's priceless golden crucifix and is overcome by the compulsion to swipe the ancient artefact from under their noses to ensure it ends up in its rightful place; a museum. A mantra that steers Indy's crazy, dicey endeavours from that moment forth.



Unfortunately, the scurvy gold diggers aren't quite so magnanimous. As Indy attempts to make a sharp exit from the cave with the assistance of his trusty steed - later deploying it as a launchpad onto the roof of a conveniently passing circus train chock-full of wildlife - they mount a fierce, armed (and four-wheeled) pursuit.



A perilous dash for freedom and safety ensues giving rise to Indy's ophidiophobia, and an impromptu lion-taming encounter involving a bullwhip, explaining Harrison Ford's real-life chin scar endured in a car crash near Laguna Beach, California where he veered off the road into a telegraph pole fumbling with his seatbelt. It's all for nothing as it happens - on returning home Indy is visited by the corrupt town sheriff who obliges him to return the *re*-stolen property to its wrongful owners, the thieves who have been hired by a crooked investor to recover it.

You lost today, kid, but that doesn't mean you have to like it.

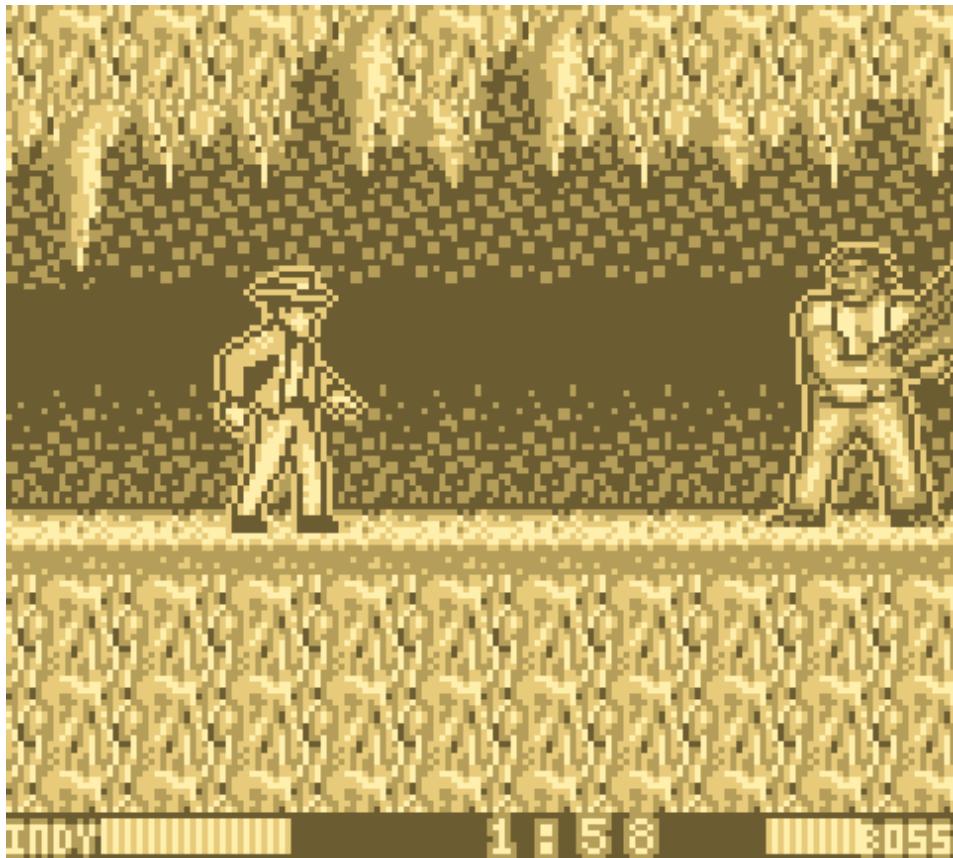
In a pivotal moment the ringleader, Garth, recognises his own bullheaded hutzpah in Indy and as a token of his admiration offers him his own fedora. Indy's signature headgear evolves into a symbol of his errant unorthodoxy, accompanying him on a lifetime of as yet unknown expeditions, Indy literally risking life and limb at one point to salvage it from a self-sealing tomb.

Indiana Jones: Archeology is the search for fact, not truth. If it's truth you're interested in, Dr Tyree's Philosophy class is right down the hall (a reference to Harrison's own

philosophy professor). So forget any ideas you've got about lost cities, exotic travel, and digging up the world. We do not follow maps to buried treasure, and 'X' never, ever marks the spot.

In the Amiga, Atari ST and DOS game Jones Junior ("DON'T call me Junior!") actually appears as a boy scout as you'd expect, whilst on other platforms such as the Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, Game Boy, Mega Drive, and Master System you play as adult Indy throughout, which makes absolutely no sense. That would make him a perennial 39 year old, much like Homer Simpson (well in some episodes at least).





Either way our hero isn't quite so agile or resourceful as his movie analogue. He shuffles about in floaty slow-motion acutely vulnerable to long falls, and skewering his noggin on protruding stalactites, causing his fragile energy resources to deplete in the blink of an eye. Your reflexes are so lackadaisical you can become rat-fodder before you've had chance to show the enemy goons the whites of your knuckles.

Save for the flaming torches you find along your travels, the ominous passages would be shrouded with darkness. As they burn down so too does the light until you are consumed by shadows and lose a life, forcing you to begin again from the start of the level. Quite an innovative, entirely relevant way to instil a sense of urgency and trepidation I thought.



Navigating the sepulchral subterrane, swinging from one dangling rope to the next (avoiding the bandits shimmying up and down them going precisely nowhere and back), leaping gaps and scrambling up and down ladders, any contact with the gun-toting cowboys or dagger-wielding Indians results in instant death. I can't recommend standing beneath falling rubble either; I believe it can be a health hazard.



Professor Henry Jones: Those people are trying to kill us!

Indiana Jones: (shouts) I know, Dad!

Professor Henry Jones: This is a new experience for me.

Indiana Jones: It happens to me all the time.



Initially, your only defence is your bare fists, though Indy's trademark bullwhip can be found strewn on the floor furnishing you with a whopping five lashes before it expires and you're reduced to delivering knuckle sandwiches once again. Wait a minute, why would a whip have limited 'ammunition' and where does it go when it runs down to zero?

While I lodge that one with Mulder and Scully, I should highlight that regardless of the means, tip-top timing is essential to land a killer blow at just the right moment to neuter enemies, eschewing a fatal collision. Easier said than done when your arms demand a week's prior notice before acting on an instruction to draw them back. Try reacting in the heat of the moment and you'll soon find yourself donating your bones to the already well-stocked piles littering the floor.

Racing across the top of a speeding train in the second half of level 1, we hurdle between carriages, bounding over thrusting rhino horns and giraffe heads (actually foam and fibreglass animatronics for the movie's close-up shots) to evade the wrath of more feisty cowboys and Indians. As long as you don't dawdle it's possible to reach and strike them down before they're able to return fire, assuming your pixel-perfect jumping is up to par.

26 years on we catch up with a now-adult Indy to embark on level 2's challenges. In the movie he traces the elusive Cross of Coronado to an area off the coast of Portugal where he narrowly averts a waterlogged end to his preservational evangelism at the hands of 'The Man in the Panama Hat'; the same antiquities collector who hired scuzzy looters to steal the cross when Indy was still in short pants.

Panama Hat: Small world, Dr. Jones.

Indiana Jones: Too small for two of us.

Panama Hat: This is the second time I've had to reclaim my property from you.

Indiana Jones: That belongs in a museum.

Panama Hat: So do you.

With the cross back in his possession, the philanthropic doctor offers to bequeath it to the curative charge of Marcus Brody's museum. Meanwhile Indy receives a package in the post from Venice; his father's treasured - 40-year-old work in progress - Grail diary, which only later does he adroitly interpret as a distress signal. As explained by Walter Donovan, a well-heeled American industrialist and antiques aficionado, Henry (played by Sean Connery, James Bond being the father of Indiana Jones of course) has disappeared

under mysterious circumstances having taken off on one of his inadvisable, cavalier jaunts, this time in search of the Holy Grail... the pinnacle of questing pursuits as we know from watching Monty Python . It's interesting to note here for trivia fans that had Sean not accepted the role, Gregory Peck or Jon Pertwee would have been Spielberg's second choice.

Dr. Henry Jones: (To Indy) The search for the Grail, is not about archaeology. If captured by the Nazis, the armies of evil will march across the face of the earth! Do you understand me?

Spurred on by the discovery of the stone Grail tablet and Friar's manuscript alluding to proof of the legend's legitimacy, Donovan intends to recruit Indy to follow in his father's footsteps. Visiting Henry to find his home ransacked and his father absent, Indy acquiesces to Donovan's wishes, and with Marcus in tow heads to the Venice library where Dr Jones Snr was last spotted.



In the catacombs beneath what in reality is actually St. Barnaba Church in Venice, together with Henry's Austrian colleague, Dr. Elsa Schneider, they unearth the tomb of Sir Richard, one of the three Knights of the First Crusade, along with his shield inscribed with cryptic details relating to the Holy Grail's whereabouts. A step in the right direction you'd imagine, that is until the 'Brotherhood of the Cruciform Sword', a secret society dedicated to safeguarding the sanctity of the Grail, set ablaze the rat-infested death trap to thwart disclosure of the ultimate pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Speaking of rats, any seen in the movie were technically part of the cast; 2000 were bred purely to take part in the production since common or garden varieties would be crawling with fleas and disease-ridden. That shrill screeching sound heard as they trample over one another in a desperate bid for freedom is actually a recording of thousands of chickens.

Following an intense speedboat chase, Indy reluctantly saves the life of Kazim, the leader of the Brotherhood. In return, he informs Elsa and Junior that his father is being held hostage in Castle Brunwald located on the Austrian-German border. Go on, see if you can guess where the next map-trotting red line will transport us?



Indiana Jones: (shouting, as the boat is being chopped up by a propeller) Why are you trying to kill us?

Kazim: Because you are looking for the Holy Grail!

Indiana Jones: My *father* was looking for the Holy Grail! Did you kill him too?

Kazim: No!

Indiana Jones: Where is he? Talk or you're dead! Dammit tell me! Tell me!

Kazim: If you don't let go Dr. Jones, we'll both die!

Indiana Jones: Then we'll die!

Kazim: My soul is prepared! How's yours?

Pixelated Indy's mission entails skipping the library altogether, heading directly to the castle. In the game's location-blending alternative universe we must track down the tomb of Sir Richard and his shield, which contains the vital inscription.





To ensure we're on the right track - and as a not-so-subtle copyright protection check mechanism - we're tasked with choosing the correct archway through which to enter from a range of six possibilities by consulting the manual, technically more of a pamphlet. Entering the 'crossroads' screen, a date appears above the archways that must be matched to a table found in the manual on the reverse side of the 'Byzantine Crusader' newspaper article. Tracing the month across the horizontal axis and the day down the vertical access we reach a coded hieroglyphic that correlates with one of those adorning the arch entrances. In order to make any progress you must enter the arch displaying the correct symbol, or forever remain lost inside a maze of dead ends.



Aping the genuine article i.e. fleshy Indy, on a couple of occasions you get to use your whip to bridge the gap between platforms rather than only as a weapon, all the while keeping an eye out for those bone-chilling, brick-dislodging lightning strikes, and weaving between blistering fireballs and rodents (some of them ignited in flames).



Indiana Jones: (of Indy's new lover) How did you know she was a Nazi?

Professor Henry Jones: She talks in her sleep.

Slipping back into movieville, Marcus is captured in Hatay despite being under the protective custody of local excavator and compatriot, Sallah, and Indy rescues his dad from the castle having outed Elsa and Donovan as Nazi-sympathising stooges who offered to help the rescue effort merely as a ruse to tracking down the Holy Grail for their own nefarious "fortune and glory".



Indiana Jones: I came here to save you!

Dr. Henry Jones: Oh yeah, and who's gonna come to save you, Junior?!

Indiana Jones: I told you...(grabs machine gun and shoots Nazis) don't call me 'Junior'!

Indiana - his preferred appellation - was actually the name of George Lucas's pet dog. Not so coincidentally Indy's childhood pet pooch in the movies too.



A smooth-as-silk segue later, back on the small screen it's 1989 and we're in our bedrooms channelling a whip-cracking, grizzled explorer once again. When you've shaken off the time-travel hangover we scale Castle Brunwald's tower of ascending floors, scouring every last nook and cranny for the Knight's Templar Shield to pin down the fundamental clues that will lead us to the Holy Grail located in the Canyon of the Crescent Moon in Hatay. Oh, and rescue

your pop before the Nazis can prise any useful information from his insubordinate lips.

Daddy reveals that his diary contains the secret to overcoming the impediment posed by a trio of booby traps, behind which the Holy Grail is sequestered. With the stolen book recovered from the dastardly double-crossing Elsa at a book-burning event, Jones' plan their exit from Germany via a Nazi Zeppelin, the contingency plan being to escape in a biplane appended beneath should they be exposed, which of course they are, and the Zeppelin is ordered to head back to base so they can be apprehended.



Dr. Henry Jones: (boarding a bi-plane) I didn't know you can fly a plane!

Indiana Jones: Fly? Yes. Land? No!

Just when Indy thinks he's home free, the dynamic duo crashland following a hair-raising dogfight with the Luftwaffe pilots, though ironically it's Henry who accidentally destroys the tail of their own getaway plane forcing it to nosedive into a farm settlement.



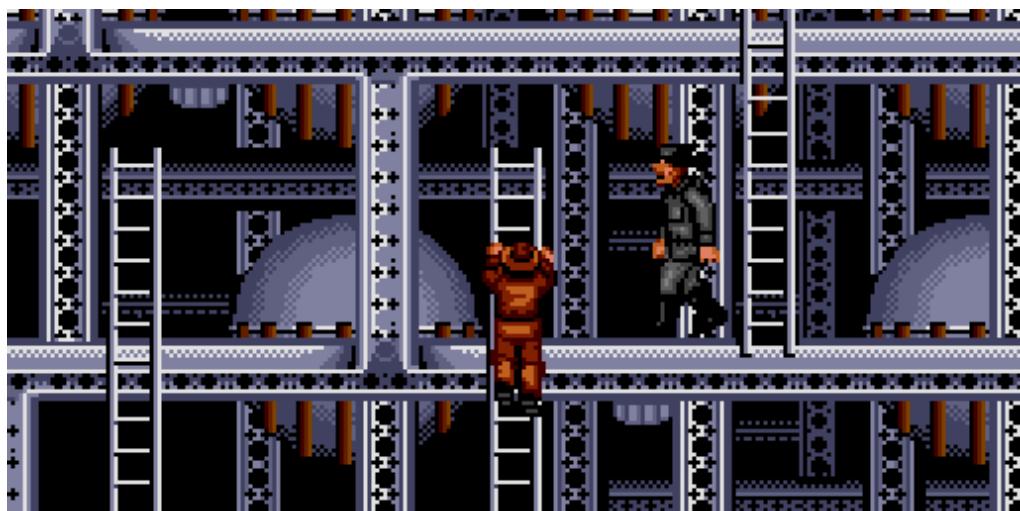
Indiana Jones: (spotting an approaching fighter) 11 o'clock! Dad, 11 o'clock!

Dr. Henry Jones: (looking at his watch) What happens at 11 o'clock?

We take to the skies in the Zeppelin for level 3 as the camera's focus bobs and sways invoking a sense of queasy drunkenness. Your latest objective is to seize the Grail diary before the Nazis can get their mitts on it, rescue daddy (again) and evacuate in the emergency biplanes. Only this being such a pitiful excuse for a movie tie-in creation you'll have to use your imagination if you wish to 'experience' any of this. Recovering the diary entails walking into it as it levitates between platforms, and the level terminates when your feet touch the wings of the biplane as you descend the emergency escape ladder. Henry is nowhere to be seen.



As the story goes, our phoney identification papers are especially flimsy and so begin disintegrating from the moment we set off. To avert being denounced as an intruder and the Nazis raising the alarm, we're obliged to periodically recover fresh ones. Should you find yourself without the necessary paperwork, the soldiers ramp up the pace, trudging back and forth doubly determined to bash in your skull, making it onerous to reach ladders before colliding with a guard.



In possession of the map extracted from the diary and given to Marcus for safekeeping, the Nazi's close in on the Grail. Bribed with a Rolls-Royce - having turned his nose up at a chest-bursting with precious valuables - the Sultan of Hatay gives his blessing for the Nazis to borrow his armoury to

grease the expeditional wheels so to speak... or should that be tracks?

Sultan: Rolls-Royce Phantom Two. 4.3 litre, 30 horsepower, six-cylinder engine, with Stromberg Downdraft carburettor. Can go from zero to 100 kilometers an hour in 12.5 seconds. And I even like the color.

Donovan: The keys are in the ignition, Your Highness.



In spite of their best-laid plans the Nazis are ambushed by the Brotherhood, while in the midst of a plot to rescue Marcus from the Sultan's Mark VII Tank (that features in the NES game, yet not the Amiga), Henry is dad-knapped by SS

Colonel Ernst Vogel forcing Indy to stage a horse-mounted rescue mission to free them both. In a high-octane tank-top brawl with Vogel, the WWI vintage vehicle plunges over a cliff, Indy disentangling himself just in the nick of time, while his bete noire falls to his doom.

Walter Donovan: (points a gun at Indy) The Grail is mine. And you're going to get it for me.

Indiana Jones: Shooting me won't get you anywhere.

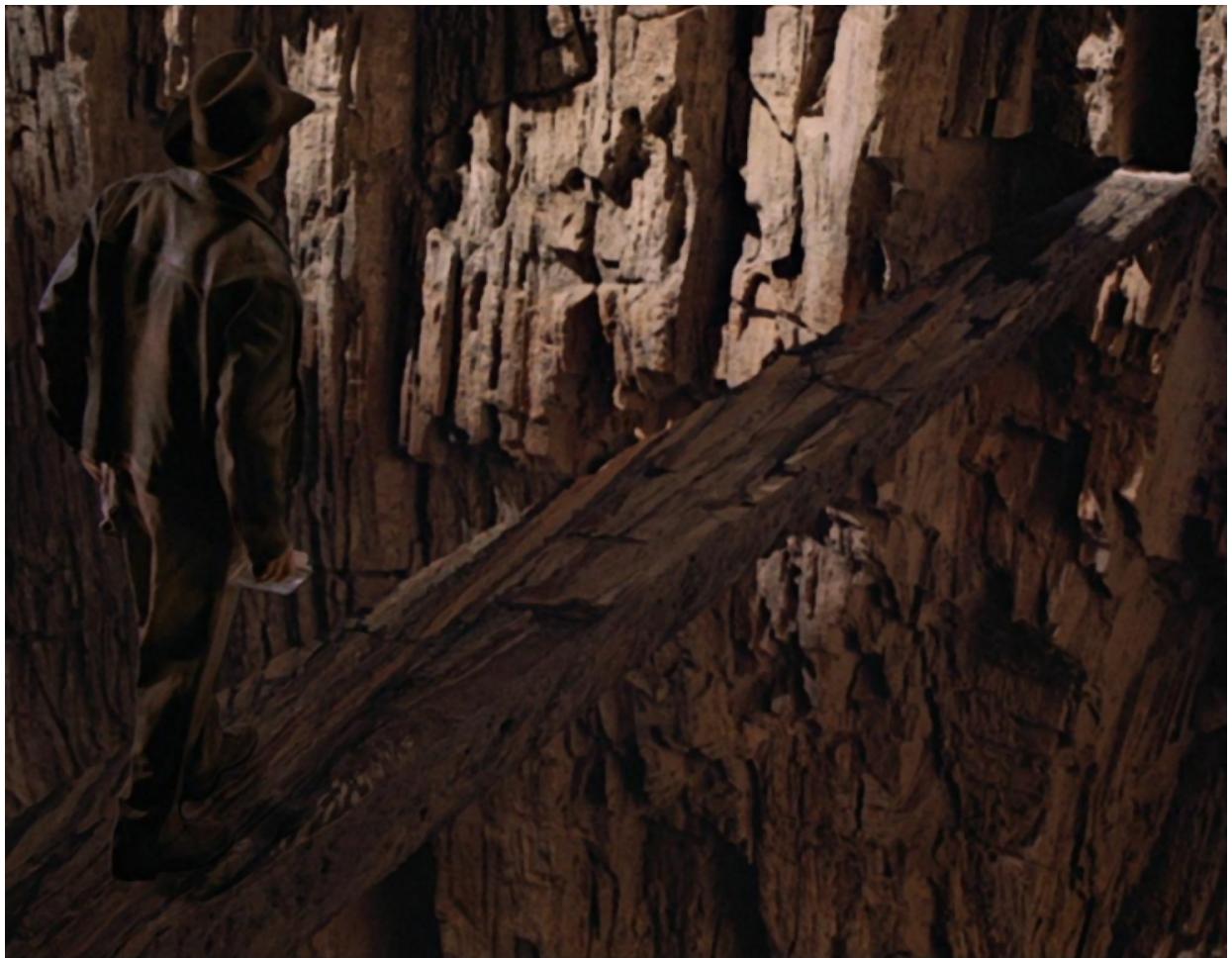
Walter Donovan: You know something, Dr. Jones? You're absolutely right.

(He shoots Henry in the stomach)

As in the movie, for the level 4 finale we're captured and taken to the site of the Holy Grail - a real temple in Petra, Jordan as it happens - by Elsa and Donovan to aid the Nazis in their archaeological burglary escapade. Henry is callously shot by Donovan to motivate us to reach the chalice of eternal life in order to rejuvenate him without any double-dealing chicanery. Accordingly the timer for this sequence is a rapidly fading heart icon representing Jones Senior's dwindling health.



Wrenching him back from the brink of death encompasses successfully nailing three tests of faith as decreed by the 13th-century mythology... the Breath of God, Word of God, and the Path of God, which the Nazis don't have the nous to suss out by themselves.



Dr. Henry Jones: When we get to Alexandretta, we will face 3 challenges; First: 'The Breath of God' - Only the penitent man will Pass. Second: 'The Word of God' - Only in the footsteps of God will he proceed. Third: 'The Path of God' - Only in the leap from the lion's head will he prove his worth.

Indy accomplishes this safely - in the game by leaping over gaps between concrete slabs and sawblades embedded in the floor, and landing on lettered tiles in the correct sequence.



Walter Donovan: Enjoy this Mr. Brody. You're about to witness the best discoveries in the history of mankind.

Marcus Brody: You're meddling with powers you can't possibly comprehend.

Somehow reaching the Grail chamber in one piece he's startled to discover that it's presided over by a 700-year-old knight who was originally to be portrayed by Sir Laurence Olivier had he not been close to his death bed at the time. Ultimately, classically trained British actor, Robert Eddison, instead stepped up to the plate to take the role. Complicating matters further, the one true Last Supper chalice is obscured by a menagerie of false grails that have

the power to extinguish life rather than granting it. Donovan - delegating the decision to the better educated, though unbeknownst to him, *side-switching* Elsa - inevitably chooses unwisely, ageing in record-breaking time and disintegrating into dust.



Indy, on the contrary, guesses correctly, fills the humble carpenter's cup with holy water and passes it to Henry to drink, healing him immediately. It takes one to know one; before Harrison was Han Solo he earned his living as a carpenter... one of his projects was to work on a house belonging to George Lucas.

Grail Knight: You have chosen... wisely. But, beware: the Grail cannot pass beyond the Great Seal, for that is the boundary, and the price, of immortality.

Elsa, still preoccupied with dreams of untold wealth and notoriety, attempts to escape with the Grail - a heinous taboo according to the knight - causing the temple to collapse and her to teeter over the edge of the yawning precipice.

Professor Henry Jones: Elsa never really believed in the grail. She thought she'd found a prize.

Indiana Jones: And what did you find, Dad?

Professor Henry Jones: Me? Illumination.



In turmoil, Indy, wrestling with his initial instincts, is persuaded to abandon the imperilled Grail and flea before it's too late. Pushing scholarly logic ahead of glory-hunting tips the balance in their favour. As a result, the party survives, riding off into the resplendent sunset to fight another day... or perhaps an alien or two in years to come!



Of course, the Grail pales into obscurity next to the more pertinent, redeemed artefact... Indy's relationship with his estranged father, who significantly doesn't call him by his preferred name until there's a chance he could lose him for good.

(Indiana slips and nearly falls into the abyss, but Henry grabs his hand)

Professor Henry Jones: Junior, give me your other hand! I can't hold on!

Indiana Jones: (reaching for the Grail) I can get it. I can almost reach it, Dad...

Professor Henry Jones: Indiana.

(surprised, Indy looks up at his father)

Professor Henry Jones: Indiana... let it go.

In Tiertex's rendition of events the curtain-closing climax isn't quite so spectacularly dramatic. We reach the terminus

of the obstacle course, collect the chalice and are prompted to enter our name in the high score table. There's no congratulations screen or animated wrap-up sequence whatsoever. Nothing, nada, zilchety zip. Hopefully, you had a bottle of bubbly on ice. Not to drown your sorrows, to render the game's floppy disk inoperable so you'll never have the misfortune to run it ever again.



Critical opinion at the time of release was wildly divergent depending on the version reviewed, however, the Amiga camp mostly saw through this paper-thin, cheap imitation of a classic movie, which quite frankly deserved far greater reverence.



"A thoroughly enjoyable platform romp with everybody's favourite hero. It's tough and sometimes very frustrating, but it's addictive enough to keep you playing until you beat Hitler."

81% - Computer and Video Games (August 1989)

"Additions to the ST game are a couple of extra sound effects, such as the 'Indy walking on cornflakes' effect when he moves. The same's true with the admittedly nice digitised pictures but how much nicer some real gameplay would have been."

48% - The Games Machine (September 1989)

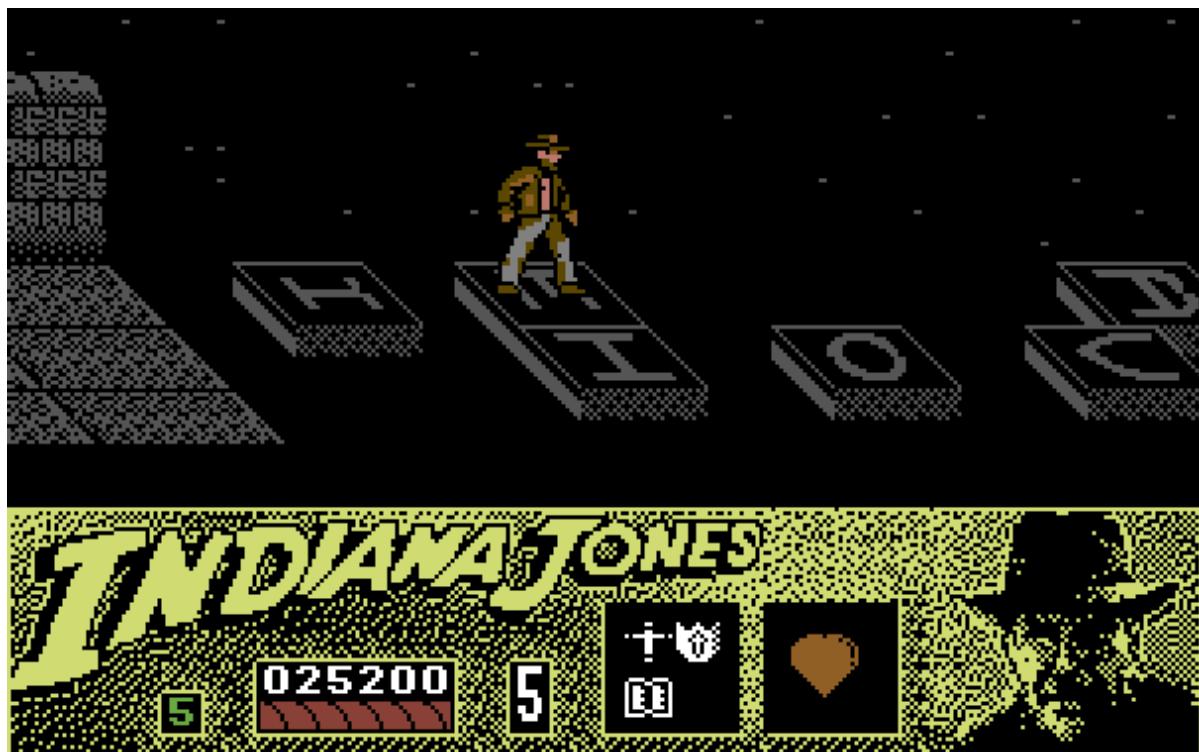
"Indy plods along as you battle with the poor programming. It really would be far better to spend your dosh on hiring out the vid and giving your fingers a rest."

26% - ST Format (December 1991)

"The way he moves, it's sure to be the last crusade Indy tackles without the aid of orthopaedic footwear. Not recommended except for the very patient."

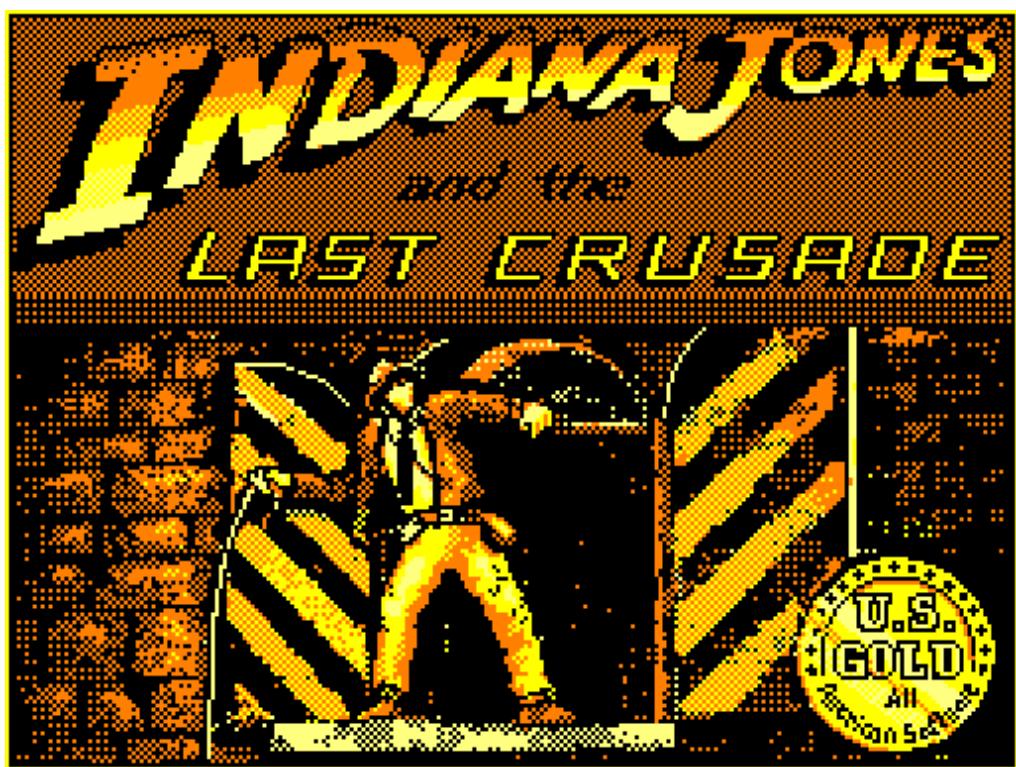
35% - Commodore Format (December 1991)





"A colourful loading screen promises a good game, but its actual appearance makes it look like a direct port over from the Spectrum and movement is even slower, with Indy swashbuckling at the speed of a crippled snail. See the movie, but approach the game with caution."

38% - The Games Machine (Amstrad version, September 1989)

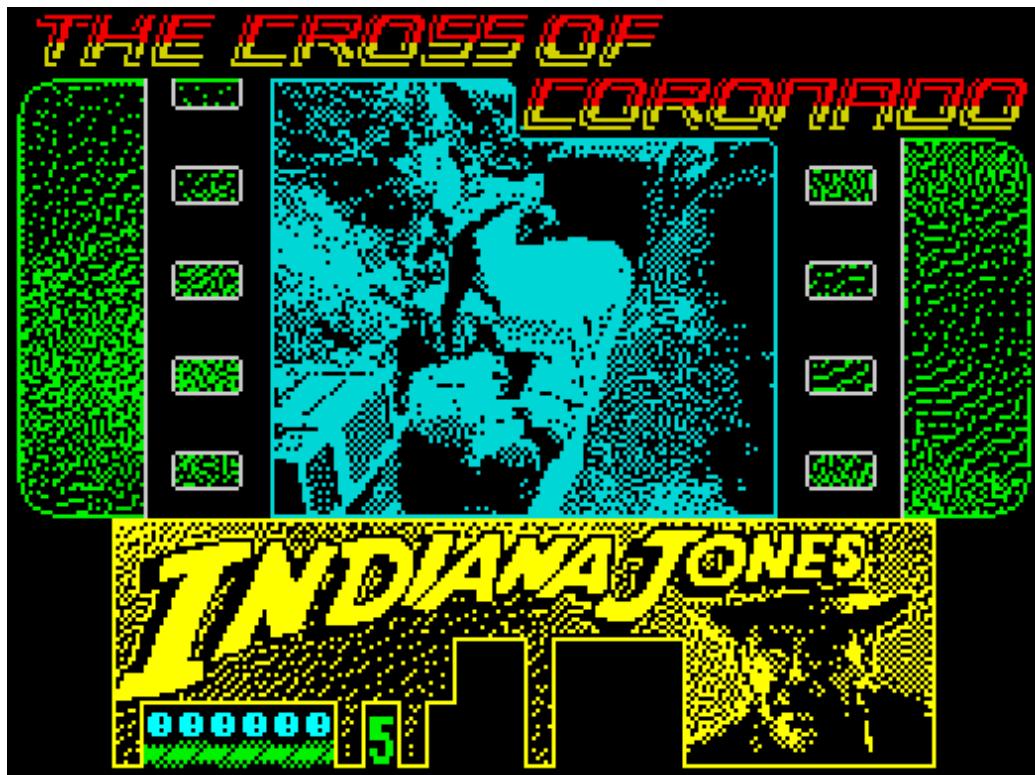


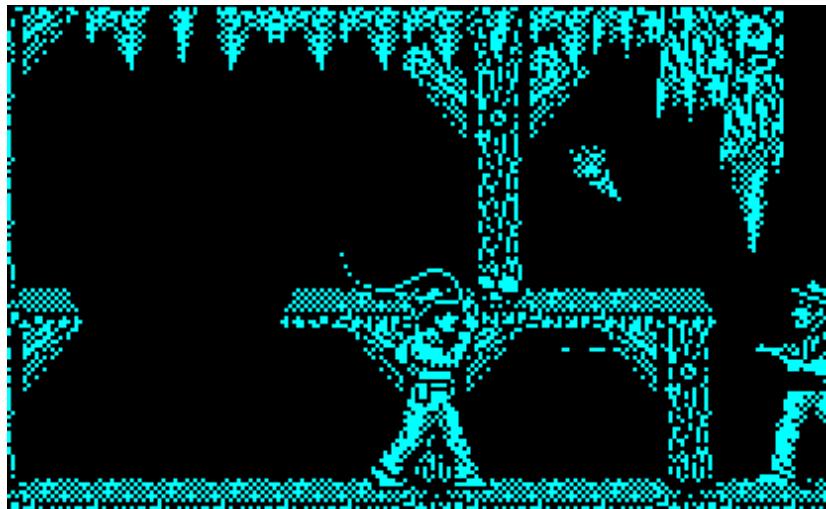
"This is definitely the best Indy Jones game. The gameplay is old hat (groan) and is terribly frustrating at times, but if you like the platforms and ladders style of game you'll find it enjoyable. As a tie-in to the film it works very well, but it stands up as a game in its own right too."

77% - Amiga Format (July 1989)

"Predictably monochrome (and not necessarily a drawback), colour isn't the only missing thing: what happened to the stalactites that plague the first level of the 16-bit versions? More seriously, why is Indy an adult and not a boy scout? Movement is also on the slow side especially when Indy whips a bad guy; not very impressive."

46% - The Games Machine (Spectrum version, September 1989)





Professor Henry Jones: This is intolerable!

Given how easy it is to perish, your five life allocation seems remarkably stingy, and what certainly doesn't help your cause is Indy's lethargic, arthritic reflexes. Often the upshot (wouldn't a gun upgrade have been nice?) is mistimed leaps, or striking an adversary too late to inflict any damage.

Shooting Indy in the other foot are the claustrophobic, stalactite-festooned caves making safe navigation a chore, and the flawed edge detection of platforms that will have you tearing your hair out in frustration as you drift straight through seemingly solid props.

Scrabbling desperately in the desert sand for something positive to say, an accurate mimeograph of Indy's iconic theme tune ushers in a well-drawn title screen complete with signature font. Tiertex also made a reasonable effort to digitise a selection of black and white stills from the movie to serve as interstitial level introduction screens.

That said, fundamentally Tiertex's interpretation of Indy's Last Crusade is a shoddy besmirching of the venerable Lucas-

Spielberg franchise, one that should have been put out of its misery long before hitting the shelves. Lucasfilm aren't off the hook either; surely they should have known better than to entrust this precious cargo to the likes of U.S. Gold and Tiertex. Sadly, they "chose... poorly".